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ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

LIBRARIAN

OF THE

NEW ENGLAND

HISTORIC GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY,

PRESENTED AT THE

ANNUAL MEETING, JANUARY 6, 1892.

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NEW ENGLAND

HISTORIC GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY.

REPORT

OF

GEORGE A. GORDON,

READ AT THE

ANNUAL MEETING, JANUARY 6, 1892.

At the annual meeting of the New England Historic Genealogical Society, held Jan. 7, 1891, a committee was appointed to investigate the matter of the sale, exchange, and removal of books, pamphlets and newspapers.

The printed Proceedings of the Society at that meeting, which were edited by the Publishing Committee, contain no record of the appointment of that Committee, nor can any mention of its existence be found in the synopsis of the proceedings published in the REGISTER for July, 1891.

This significant silence has never been satisfactorily explained. One thing has been determined. It is not the fault of the editor of publications.

At the annual meeting held Jan. 6, 1892, Capt. Geo. A. Gordon, who had been made a sub committee, and who had in his hands all the material from which an intelligent understanding of the subject could be formed, read the following report. As no provision was made for printing it in the Proceedings of the Society, it has been thought proper that a detailed statement of so thorough and exhaustive an investigation as this should be placed in the hands of members of the Society.

At that meeting an effort was made to effect a thorough reform in the government of the Society, and a "REFORM TICKET" was put in the field. It was presented by Capt. Gordon, and was headed "SHORT TERM FOR THE PRESIDENCY; SAFE INVESTMENT OF THE SOCIETY'S FUNDS; NO DEPLETION OF THE LIBRARY." Owing to the fact that a severe snow storm was raging, the attendance was small, and the effort was unsuccessful, but the margin was so narrow that a loss of six votes in the one case and ten in the other would have prevented the election of both MR. GOODELL and MR. EDES.

The attention of all members of the Society is earnestly called to this report, and to the report of the Librarian, the Rev. Dr. Byington, which conclusively show the need of a thorough investigation of the methods of those who now control the Society.

TO THE OFFICERS AND MEMBERS

OF THE

NEW ENGLAND HISTORIC GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY.

BOSTON, Jan. 6, 1892.

GENTLEMEN: On the 15th of January, 1891, the undersigned received official notification that he had been appointed, in conjunction with Rev. George M. Bodge, at the annual

NEW-ENGLAND

HISTORIC GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY.

(2638)

REFORM TICKET. Feb. 8. 1872

SHORT TERM FOR THE PRESIDENCY.

SAFE INVESTMENTS FOR THE SOCIETY'S FUNDS.

NO DEPLETION OF THE LIBRARY.

President.

CHARLES SIDNEY ENSIGN, LL. B., of Watertown, Massachusetts.

Vice-Presidents.

BENJAMIN APTHORP GOULD, LL. D., of Cambridge, Massachusetts.

HON. JOSEPH WILLIAMSON, A. M., of Belfast, Maine.

HON. JOSEPH BURBEEN WALKER, A. M., of Concord, New Hampshire.

HON. JAMES BARRETT, LL. D., of Rutland, Vermont.

ELISHA BENJAMIN ANDREWS, D. D., LL. D., of Providence, Rhode Island.

EDWARD ELBRIDGE SALISBURY, LL. D., of New Haven, Connecticut.

Recording Secretary.

GUSTAVUS ARTHUR HILTON, LL. B., of Boston, Massachusetts.

Corresponding Secretary.

WILLIAM STANFORD STEVENS, A. M., M. D., of Boston, Massachusetts.

Treasurer.

BENJAMIN BARSTOW TORREY, of Boston, Massachusetts.

Librarian.

HENRY WINCHESTER CUNNINGHAM, A. B., of Boston, Massachusetts.

Councillors for Three Years.

ANDREW PRESTON PEABODY, D. D., LL. D., of Cambridge, Massachusetts.

HAMILTON ANDREWS HILL, A. M., of Boston, Massachusetts.

BENJAMIN GREENE SMITH, of Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Councillors for One Year.

HENRY PICKERING WALCOTT, M. D., of Cambridge, Massachusetts.

EZRA HOYT BYINGTON, D. D., of Worcester, Massachusetts.

meeting of the Society, January 7, 1891, a committee to investigate the matter of the sale, exchange, and removal of books, pamphlets, and newspapers from the library; having attended to the duty charged, he begs to submit a report.

The Committee met, during the summer, at the call of the Chairman at the building of the Society, 18 Somerset street; and, at the request of the Chairman, a package of MSS. was presented for attention, as embracing all the information in the possession of the Society on the subject under consideration.

This package contained, viz.:

Eight postal cards addressed to Mr. W. K. Watkins.

One postal card addressed to the Society.

One letter from Messrs. Loudermilk & Co., Washington, D. C., addressed to Mr. W. K. Watkins.

One memorandum note from Mr. G. K. Clarke in behalf of the Boston Athenæum.

One acknowledgment from the Essex Institute of the receipt of sundry bound newspapers and public documents *as a donation*.

Report of Committee on Sale of Books, relating to request of Mr. S. W. Bush for copies of the Christian Register.

Two letters from Department of the Interior at Washington, D. C., to Mr. Watkins.

One letter from Department of the Interior at Washington, D. C., to the Society.

One ditto to the Society.

One (unaddressed) from Mr. Barton, librarian of American Antiquarian Society, Worcester.

A memorandum, untitled and unsigned, and commencing with page 2 and extending to page 5, purporting to be a copy of proceedings of some body evidently subsidiary to this Society, with accompanying papers, viz.:

A. Signed by Mr. R. C. Winthrop, Jr., Chairman, on a descriptive list of such bound books, pamphlets, not periodical, broadsides, MSS. Engravings of the Society proper to be sold or exchanged, 29 Apr., 1889.

B. Special Committee's report on newspapers and periodicals, 11 Oct. 1880, with two supplements.

C. Lists of Wants from the State Library, the Essex Institute, and an offer from the librarian of the Minnesota Historical

Society to send this Society directories of the city of St. Paul.

D. Report of the Committee on Sale and Exchange of books and pamphlets, signed by Hamilton A. Hill, Sec. pro tem., 21 Nov., 1887.

E. Book Catalogues, Bound Vols. Newspapers; Unbound Files do.; List of Single do.; Fiction and Literature pamphlets; List of Text Books.

C. Report to the Council, 29 Sept. 1890, signed G. H. Norcross, Chairman.

These papers have had the careful examination and inspection of your Committee, and have been returned, at his request, to the Rev. Dr. Byington, Librarian.

Your Committee notice the total absence of invoices of shipments of books, pamphlets, or other treasures of the Society, and of corresponding acknowledgments from parties receiving, save in a single instance, in which the Librarian of the Essex Institute acknowledges the receipt of a very large consignment *as a donation*.

Your Committee notice the absence of evidence of values received for any removals from the library.

Your Committee are unable to report what volumes, pamphlets, or other treasures have been removed from the library, whither they have gone other than to the Essex Institute, what disposition has been made of them, or what has been received for them.

Your Committee find in the papers submitted, grounds for belief that large removals have been made from the library, and, as at present advised, your Committee report no advantage to the Society, thereby, except shelf room and the hiatus resulting from the loss.

GEO. A. GORDON.

THE CONDITION AND WANTS OF THE LIBRARY.

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

LIBRARIAN

OF THE

NEW ENGLAND

HISTORIC GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY,

PRESENTED AT THE

ANNUAL MEETING, JANUARY 6, 1892.

BOSTON:
PRESS OF S. WOODBERRY & CO.,
MDCCCXCII.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

It is three years since the Society has had a Librarian's Report, because the office of Librarian has been vacant. For this reason the Annual Report, which was presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society by the Librarian, Dr. Byington, was much fuller and more detailed than the reports have usually been. As soon as the Report had been read, the desire was expressed that it should be printed in full, in order that the information concerning the "Condition and wants of the Library," which it contained, might be given to all the members of the Society. A motion was therefore presented to print the Report in full, with the Proceedings. An objection to the publication of the report was made by the friends of the present administration, and the motion was amended, so as to refer the Report to the Council; which amendment was adopted by a vote of 27 to 19.

Those who desired to put the Report into the hands of the members of the Society have thereupon printed it by private subscription. It is hoped that this Report may lead to the adoption of some efficient measures for the enlargement and improvement of the Library.

ANNUAL REPORT

OF

EZRA H. BYINGTON, D.D.

LIBRARIAN.

The By-Laws of the Society require the Librarian to present at the annual meeting a statement of the condition and wants of the Library and of the Cabinet, with notice of important accessions to each during the year.

When I accepted the office of Librarian a year ago, it was with the understanding that I should be responsible only for a general superintendence of the Library. I was assured that this need not take much of my time. When I entered upon my duties, however, I found the condition of the Library very different from what I had expected. The shelves had long been overcrowded, and it had not been possible to keep them in good order. Some important sections of it were hardly available for use without great inconvenience. The card catalogue was imperfect. There were large numbers of pamphlets that were not yet catalogued. Some of the rooms were in great confusion. It was plainly necessary to carry the work of reconstruction, which had been going on for some time in the basement, through the whole library. I found, also, that the salaries, which the Society had been accustomed to pay the assistants in the Library, were too small to secure the services of persons who had been trained in the modern methods of library work, and who were competent to carry forward the work in an orderly way. Those whom I found had been employed about the rooms for several years, and some of them

did not readily adopt the improved methods. It was plain, therefore, that I must give more time and attention to the work than I had expected, if any permanent improvement was to be secured. As I had accepted the office, I felt bound in honor to carry the work through the year. I have found it necessary, therefore, during the last half of the year, to devote about half my time to the Library, besides the most of my summer vacation. The work has encroached so much upon my time, that I decided, some months ago, that I must leave it at the end of the year. As soon as the Committee of Nominations was appointed, therefore, I sent them notice that I could not consent, under any circumstances, to hold the office of Librarian another year.

I wish to acknowledge the valuable help I have received from the members of the Committee on the Library, and especially from my predecessor, Mr. John Ward Dean, A. M. He has been ready at all times to answer my inquiries, and to render assistance. At my request, he has, at various times, taken my place in the Library, and served his old friends with books, as he was accustomed to do in former years. Mr. Henry E. Woods, who had given much time to the Library after the resignation of the former Librarian, has been very helpful to me in all ways. There has, indeed, been entire harmony among those who have been charged by the Society to care for the Library. I have, also, been brought into very pleasant relations with those of our members who are in the habit of resorting to the Library, and, by correspondence, with a large number of other members of the Society, and have had an opportunity to learn their opinions and their wishes in regard to the general management of the Library.

Number of Volumes in the Library.

The last annual report was presented by Mr. Dean three years ago. The Library then contained 24,131 bound volumes and 68,723 pamphlets. No statement was made as to the number of manuscripts, maps, newspapers, or articles of the Cabinet. But the statement of the number of books and pamphlets was not based upon any recent inspection of the Library.

There had been no count of the books for many years. There were no shelf-lists, and without these it was not practicable to make an accurate annual examination of the books. It was known that some valuable volumes had been lost, as the books were in constant use by a great number of people, many of them strangers, but there were no means of ascertaining what books were present and what were lost. The custom had been to add each year the number of books and pamphlets received during that year to the totals reported the year before.

There were added to the Library in the two years that followed the date of Mr. Dean's last report, not including the present year:

By gift,	526	volumes.
By purchase,	156	"
Making,	682	
Adding these to the number reported in 1889	24,131	
We have a total of	24,813	
We also received,	1,947	pamphlets.
Adding these to the total for 1889,	68,723	"
We shall have,	70,670	"

In order to get the actual number of books and pamphlets in the Library January 1, 1891, we must subtract from these totals, not only whatever may have been lost in the course of years, but also the large number of books and pamphlets and other literary material that have been disposed of in the process of sifting out useless matter, which has been in progress for two or three years. I cannot obtain any definite statement of the number of books and pamphlets that have been disposed of, but it is evident that the number was not a small one.*

As we cannot count our Library, we have tried to measure it. We had on our shelves the 1st of July of this year, about 2,400 feet of bound volumes and 400 feet of pamphlets in cases. If the books average eight and one-half volumes to a foot, as they stand upon the shelves, the number of volumes is not far

* See the report of Mr. George A. Gordon, presented at the last annual meeting of the Society.

from 20,000. Of the bound volumes, 1600 feet, or two-thirds of the whole, are in the main Library room and in the side room adjoining; 150 feet are in the rooms on the floor below, and 650 feet in the upper hall. To these figures, which relate to the bound volumes upon our shelves, we should add 400 feet of pamphlets, which are in the rooms on the first floor.

Contents of the Library.

I have made an analysis of our Library, as complete as is practicable, in its present crowded condition. About thirty per cent of our books and pamphlets relate to the history of New England. This includes town and county histories, the histories of the New England States, and a large collection of directories and registers of New England towns and cities. This section is by far the most complete part of our Library. Next to these in importance, though not in the number of volumes, are the books relating to the genealogy of New England families, which are about five per cent of the whole. Next are biographies, about six per cent. Nearly ten per cent is made up of books relating to English history, including our large collection of parish registers, and English records of various kinds. Of general historical books, relating to the United States, and other countries there are ten per cent, and of books of reference three per cent. The remainder of the Library, about one-third of the whole, includes a large collection of duplicates, the remaining files of newspapers, specimens of New England literature—some very old and rare—and a considerable number of miscellaneous books, which it is not practicable to distribute into classes until the Library shall have been rearranged.

The Society has upon its shelves a large number of books which have been deposited here by the Dorchester Antiquarian Society. These books are distributed through the Library, though they are still marked by the book plate of that Society.

In addition to the books and pamphlets which are stored upon the first, second and third stories, there is a large amount of printed matter stored in the three rooms which have been fitted up in the cellar. About one-half of this consists of the publi-

cations of this Society, which have been carefully arranged upon shelves this year. We have, also, in these rooms a considerable number of bound volumes, for which there is no room up stairs. We have, also, a large number of pamphlets which have not yet been catalogued; another lot of duplicate pamphlets, and a still larger quantity of pamphlets which are still in the hands of the Committee on Sale and Exchange. These rooms prove to be quite damp, and they are not well fitted for the storage of books and pamphlets.

The Cabinet.

Of our Cabinet, it is not practicable to make a definite report. It has been the practice to speak of our portraits, and other pictures, and our statuary as a part of the Cabinet. During the last year Mr. Dean has prepared a careful list of the busts and portraits. This includes statements concerning the history of the paintings, the artists, and the givers. These busts and paintings were removed a year or two ago to a room on the first floor of this building. The removal took place while there was no Librarian to direct it, and to attend to the packing of the works of art. As soon as the work in the upper hall shall have been completed, it is proposed to return these busts and portraits to their old places.

Besides these, I have found a large number of pictures in various parts of the building, some of them in the furnace cellar, which were packed away until a suitable place should be found for them.

I have also found in the drawers of the Safe a considerable number of articles of curious interest and value. A number of larger articles are also preserved in various parts of the house, which have a value as historical memorials. Some of these have been injured while they were without the care of a Librarian. When all these articles can be gathered into cases, and properly marked, they will add new attractions to our rooms. It has been a favorite plan of mine to have these cases prepared and filled before the end of the year. The unexpected delays in the work upon the building have prevented me from carrying out this design. *I recommend to the Society to push*

forward the plan of arranging the Cabinet, so that these articles can be seen by those who visit our rooms. I am quite sure that such an exhibition would lead to a considerable enlargement of our collection.

The Work of the Year.

The work of separating useless material from the Library, which has been going on for two or three years, has simplified very much the problems connected with the Library. We have taken up the work this year as we found it, and the effort has been to carry it through the whole Library; to introduce modern methods of classification and management, and to bring the whole into regular order, so as to make its treasures more available to those who resort to it.

My own work has been that of correspondence and superintendence. I have had no time to become familiar with the books, so as to answer the calls of the readers. All that part of the work has been left, of necessity, to the assistants. At the beginning of the year there were four persons employed by the Society to care for the Library. On the 1st of June I reported to the Council that two persons would be able to do all the work that it was then practicable to do, and the Council selected Mr. Watkins and Miss Seiders as the assistants. This action of the Council made it necessary to dispense with the services of Mr. Millet, who had been for some years the principal assistant. The Council entered upon its records a vote expressing its "appreciation of his long continued services for the Society," and of "cordial good wishes for him." The members of the Council individually presented to Mr. Millet a substantial token of their good will. Later in the year Miss Seiders received a considerable addition to her salary, on account of the additional work she was doing, and also on account of her fidelity and efficiency in the discharge of her duties.

We have resumed the practice of earlier years of keeping a Visitors List. This List is interesting, not only on account of the autographs which it contains, but also for the evidence it furnishes of the wide range from which those who resort to our rooms are drawn. Its value will increase from year to year.

We also keep a book in which members of the Society are invited to enter the titles of such books as they desire to have purchased.

Some new methods of cataloguing the Accessions to the Library have been introduced, with the purpose of making a record of everything which comes into our rooms, and of the names of the givers. It has been the practice, since the retirement of Mr. Dean, to permit accessions to the Library to accumulate, without cataloguing them, or placing them upon the shelves. I found large quantities of pamphlets, and a number of packages and trunks which had been suffered to accumulate in the most slovenly manner, and which had been simply piled up in our rooms, without the proper attention to incorporate them with the Library. I found it necessary to insist rigidly upon the rule that everything that is given to the Society, or purchased by it, shall be at once examined, and entered upon the List of Accessions, and deposited in its place in the Library. We have been trying to keep the work up to date, from week to week.

The By-Laws require the Librarian to keep in some proper place such books and pamphlets as are "not appropriate to the Library or the Cabinet." The object of this provision is to secure a careful sifting of the material we receive as it comes in, so that no books shall be placed upon our shelves, which are not needed there. In accordance with this provision, I have placed by themselves a considerable number of books and pamphlets, which await the action of the Council.

The Safe.

A careful examination has been made of the manuscripts and other articles preserved in the one hundred and twenty-one drawers of our Safe. A manuscript catalogue of the contents of these drawers has been prepared for the use of those who have occasion to consult these manuscripts. This catalogue contains 2706 titles. The examination should be carried through the other parts of the Safe. The manuscripts contained in trunks and boxes should also be catalogued, and all the contents of the Safe should be rearranged by topics, so that the

valuable materials which are preserved there may be more available than they have been. *I recommend that the west end of the Safe be provided with drawers.* But these will soon be insufficient, and every year will be likely to add to the strength of the argument for a fire proof building for the Library.

The Shelves.

So far as has been practicable we have cleaned and dusted the books and shelves. It had been years since this work had been done. It would have been carried through the Library, if it had not been that the expected enlargement of the shelf accommodations, and the consequent change of place of many of the books, made it expedient to wait until the new shelves should be completed.

Accessions to the Library.

The additions to the Library during the year 1891 have been as follows:

Books purchased (including 26 purchased by the Kidder Fund),		108
Books received by gift,		459
Whole number of volumes,		567
Pamphlets received by gift,		621
Manuscripts purchased,	1	
" loaned to the Society,	2	
" received by gift,	26	
Whole number of Manuscripts,		29
Newspapers received,		75
Photographs,		10
Maps and charts,		2

In addition to the above, a large collection of town reports has been received this year, which have come from 145 cities and towns. These town reports include 39 bound volumes, and 1633 pamphlets.

These numbers are larger than in some recent years. Many of the gifts have come in response to our solicitations. But the

number of accessions is not by any means adequate to the needs of our Library. If we are to meet the wants of students of New England history, we must be able to purchase a much larger number of new books, and of valuable manuscripts, which are frequently offered to us. A hundred or a hundred and fifty volumes a year have comprised all our regular purchases for a number of years. Within a few days, I saw a box of books and pamphlets relating to early New England history, which had just been imported from England by an enterprising Library in this city. The sum paid for that single box was twice as much as our Society pays for new books in a year. There are great gaps in our Library which need to be filled by books selected by experts, who have the means to purchase in Europe as well as in this country. Already some other libraries are better furnished in some departments, which are among our own specialties, than our own. I go to the Antiquarian Library in Worcester for the best collection of pamphlets relating to New England history; and to the Congregational Library for the best collection of the works of the early fathers of New England. The Boston Public Library is not far behind our own, even in books that relate to the genealogy of New England families. If we are to hold our old rank as a Library, we must increase very much the funds devoted to the purchase of books. The literature in our special fields is abundant. We can have our share of it if we use the proper means.

Additional Room for the Library.

Our chief work this year, however, has been the less intellectual one of finding more shelf-room for our books. For ten years, and longer, the reports of the Librarian have stated that the shelves were overcrowded. When I came into office the plans for a new building, or the enlargement of the present one, had already been postponed to the indefinite future. A large part of the Building Fund had been invested in such a way that it was not available for the purpose for which it had been given, and a part of what remained of this Fund had been already expended for the changes in the basement, and for the skylight and other purposes. There were no means at hand for carry-

ing out the plans to which our late President had devoted so much time and thought. The only thing practicable in the actual circumstances of the Society, as I found it, was to increase as much as possible the shelf-room in the present building, so as to meet the immediate and pressing needs of the Library.

At the first meeting of the Council, therefore, I secured the appointment of a Committee to examine the building, and report plans for strengthening the walls and floors, and also to report plans for the necessary changes in the rooms, with estimates of the cost. As a member of this Committee, it has been my duty to study the questions involved very thoroughly, and to get such suggestions as I could from the experience of other librarians.

The following are the changes which I have recommended, and which I still hope to see carried out:*

1st. To fit up the upper hall with book-shelves on four sides, with an arrangement for alcoves, so as to provide two thousand feet of shelf-room. A plan drawn by a member of the Committee on the Library, for the details of the work, I have heartily accepted.

2d. To remove fifteen feet of the partition wall, which separates the present Library room from the side room, and to complete the shelving of the enlarged room, so as to correspond with the book-cases now in the main room. This would give us about twelve hundred feet of book-shelves on the second floor.

3d. To remove the temporary shelves from the rooms on the 1st floor, and to fit up the front room as a reception room and a room for the Council, and to fit up the rear room with the book-cases taken from the upper hall. This would give a hundred and fifty feet of shelving on the 1st floor.

4th. To introduce additional light into the halls and stairways, and paint the walls a lighter color, and to hang pictures upon the walls, with the necessary protections, so as to make the approaches to the rooms pleasant and inviting.

* This plan was presented to the Council in an elaborate paper, read Oct. 5, 1891, and by verbal statements at various meetings of the Council.

This plan would give thirty-three hundred and fifty feet of book-shelves on the three stories, which would accommodate our present Library, and leave four or five hundred feet for future growth. The monthly meetings of the Society could be held either on the 2d or 3d floors of the building. An arrangement with folding chairs would easily provide for seating those who attend the meetings.

I also recommended that the main office of the Library be retained on the 2d floor, as it is at present. I would also retain on that floor certain classes of our most attractive books, and with them a complete card catalogue of the whole Library, which catalogue I would have duplicated up stairs.

These plans provide for utilizing the whole building for the purposes of the Library, instead of trying to limit it to a single story. The time for such a limitation has evidently gone by. The plans also meet the wishes of a large proportion of our members, who object strongly to climbing an additional stairway.

Only the first part of these plans has yet been carried out. The upper hall has been entirely renovated, and fitted up with book-shelves, which are now nearly ready to be filled with books. Only 1450 feet of shelves have been put up however, instead of 2000 feet, which the plan adopted called for. But this defect can be partly cured by putting in additional shelves at a later time, though it will be at an additional cost.

The work of removing the books has been for some time in progress, and we have already something more than three thousand volumes upon the shelves in the upper story.

I am quite sure this hall will prove very attractive and convenient. It is large, well lighted, and ventilated. The arrangement of the cases, and of the alcoves, will be agreeable. When the portraits and statuary shall have been rearranged, as is proposed, many of the pleasant associations which our members have had with this room will be recalled, while the recent improvements will give it much the appearance of a modern Library.

The work which has been done upon our building is not a large work, and it seemed to me reasonable to expect that it

could be finished in such season that I could move the books, and rearrange the whole Library before the end of the year. But the work has taken the whole year, and only the first part of it is yet completed. The extreme limitations, which the new By-Laws place upon the powers of the Librarian, have made it impossible for me to have any part in carrying out the plans. However, we have made a good beginning of the work of removing the books to the new shelves. As I cannot complete the removal, and put the Library in order, I have thought best not to introduce changes in the classification of the books, or in the method of cataloguing, or of designating the books upon the shelves. It seemed to me fairer, and wiser, to leave my successor entirely free to introduce such methods as he should choose.

As soon as the books that have been designated for the upper hall have been placed upon the shelves, the way will be open to make the proposed changes upon the 1st and 2d floors. This will be much less than the work already done, and it need not be expensive.

The Wants of the Library.

The By-Laws require me to report the "wants" of the Library as well as its condition.

First, among these "wants," is a permanent Librarian. As the Library is the one important object for which the Society was formed, and has been continued so long, it would seem to follow that the officer who had the care and direction of the Library is the most important officer of the Society. So our Society has held from the beginning. In the years of its weakness and poverty it employed a Librarian. I am not aware that our Society has ever authorized a change of policy in that respect. I have no knowledge of any other Society of a similar kind that can afford to go without a Librarian. The only reason, so far as I know, why the office has been vacant in recent years, is the inability of the Society to pay a salary. But if the Society could pay for the services of a Librarian fifteen years ago, it ought to be able to do it now.

Our Library needs the constant care of a gentleman of culture and executive ability. I have had an opportunity to know

that it suffered very seriously during the two years when it was without a head. The Librarian represents the Society before the public. The presence of a competent Librarian does more than anything else to awaken confidence in the ability of the Society to make a wise use of gifts and legacies. Our experience proves that a Society without a permanent Librarian is not likely to receive legacies. It is three years since Mr. Dean retired, but to this day our Society is known, at home and abroad, as his Society. Most of the books that are given to us are directed to his care. He is still addressed, by persons in various parts of Europe, as well as in the United States, as the Librarian,—the Secretary,—and as the President. We need such a man to meet the friends who resort to our rooms from day to day. We need him to decide intelligently the questions that arise concerning the purchase of books for the various departments of the Library, and to plan wisely for filling the gaps in the Library.

Besides, a Librarian is needed to care for the safety of our building, which is not well protected from the danger of destruction by fire. The points of danger are quite numerous, and I have had occasion to know how hazardous it is to leave it in the care of persons of little prudence or fidelity.

It is now three years since the effort to obtain a Librarian without providing a salary was commenced. The position has been pressed upon a number of gentlemen who were well acquainted with the Library, and with the rules under which we live in this Society, without success. As the result of all that has been done, you have had the services of a Librarian,—such as they are,—one year out of three.

Nor is the financial argument a strong one. We are now paying the two assistants a little more than $1000 a year. The average annual expense under the late Librarian was only $700 more. The income of the legacies received two years ago would almost pay the difference. The salary should be larger than that which was paid Mr. Dean, but a small Library like ours can secure an excellent Librarian without paying a large salary. The success of our former President in adding $100,000 to the property of the Society within a few years, shows that under

favorable conditions we can reasonably expect to secure the funds we need for a wise and enterprising administration of our Library. It is time to stop spending our funds, and try to increase them.

Second, among the "wants" of the Library, is a revision of the By-Laws, which define the powers and duties of the Librarian. So long as I held the office myself, I was prevented by considerations of propriety, from asking for such a revision as would enlarge my own powers. I am at liberty to urge it now for the advantage of my successors, as well as of the Society. This is the first year that has afforded a test of the working of these new rules, because the office had been vacant. I am sorry to report, as the result of my experience, that I have been seriously limited and hindered by the By-Laws as they are administered.

It is for the interest of the Society, in my opinion, to trust its Librarian with ample powers to control and improve the Library, and then to hold him responsible for the work. The policy, at present, seems to be to divide and distribute the powers and duties of the officials so that it is not easy to fix responsibility upon any one. We have sixteen standing Committees of the Council, and these Committees are all appointed by the President.*

Five of these Committees are brought into direct connection with the Librarian; namely, the Committee on the Library; that on the Society's house; on Printing and Stationery; on the Cabinet; and on Sale and Exchange. The arrangement is complicated, unwieldy, meddlesome, and it is anything but economical. The Librarian is nominally the custodian of the building, but the real control is with the Committee on the Society's house. The Librarian cannot select his assistants, or dismiss them for neglect of duty, or for incompetence. He has no right to purchase a book for the Library, or a book for records, or a quire of paper. He must go to a Committee to

* These sixteen Committees include sixty-six names, although in a few instances the same person serves on two Committees. It is plain that the power to appoint these sixteen Committees adds very much to the power and patronage of the presiding officer.

repair a broken window, or an insecure smoke-pipe, and if the building should take fire, I am not sure that he could put out the fire without consulting a Committee.

I earnestly recommend *that the work now assigned to these five Committees, be given to one, which shall be called the Committee on the Library; that this Committee be elected by the Society, and directly responsible to it; and also that the Librarian be Ex-officio the Chairman of this Committee.* I would have this Committee made up, as it is at present, of gentlemen who have a personal knowledge of the care of a Public Library, and who are willing to take time to go into its rooms, and to keep themselves informed in regard to its methods and wants. The Librarian should have a reasonable control of the Society's house; he should have the leading part in the purchase of books; and in framing the rules for the Library; he should select the Assistants, and they should be responsible to him for the proper discharge of their duties; and he should direct the purchase of those articles needed for the use of the Library.

Thirdly: The Library needs to define itself. Up to a recent period it has taken everything that came to it. But the time always comes, in the history of a growing Library, when it becomes necessary to fix its limitations, and admit or exclude according to definite principles. A large amount of material has recently been removed, but our members are not agreed as to the wisdom of the selection. When I inquire why the North American Review, and some other things of similar character, were excluded, I am told that they do not relate directly to the genealogy and history of New England families. But that rule would exclude two thirds of our Library. It would exclude many of the books we have recently purchased. The fact is, the history of New England families reaches back to the Mother Country; and also reaches into Ohio, and Iowa, and Oregon, where these families now live. The spirit of the times requires us to give a liberal interpretation to our Charter. The range of investigation is broader now than it was in 1845. The lines should be drawn with great care, by persons of wide reading and generous culture. It is imperative to draw such a line. The reconstruction of the Library, now in progress, is

certain to raise questions *with respect to some thousands of volumes now upon our shelves.* The Council has the power to sell such parts of the property of the Society as it may judge unfit for the Library or the Cabinet. If the Society can define the principles on which the selections should be made, it should give the Council such rules and instructions as will guide its action.

With this view *I recommend that the last clause of Art. 1, Chap. XIII.; which provides that the Council "may dispose, by sale or exchange, of any personal property not appropriate to the Library or the Cabinet," be repealed, or modified so as to express more exactly the will of the Society.*

I earnestly commend these practical suggestions and recommendations to the attention of the Society. They are the result of a good deal of consideration of these subjects, in connection with the work of the year.

The usual List of those who have given books or pamphlets to the Society accompanies this report.

All which is respectfully submitted.

EZRA H. BYINGTON,

BOSTON, MASS., Jan. 6, 1892. *Librarian.*